

(Ret.), chairman, American Battle Monuments Commission.

Telephone Remarks to the Rolling Thunder Ride for Freedom

May 30, 2004

Thank you, Artie. It's great talking to you. I'm so pleased to speak to the members of Rolling Thunder as you attend the annual Ride for Freedom. I want to thank you for your leadership. You might tell them, Artie, that it was my honor to host you in the Oval Office—you and Mike Cobb and Gary Sheffmeyer and Jay Fairlamb and other special guests. I really appreciated you coming by to say hello.

I also received a letter from you last week, if you know, Artie. I thought you were going to offer me riding lessons—turned out you offered me Rolling Thunder's national endorsement for my reelection, and I want to thank you for your support. I'm really proud to have you stand by me—and the membership.

But more importantly, I appreciate the tremendous service that the members of Rolling Thunder perform on behalf of our veterans and active duty Armed Forces. I'm not surprised you're doing such good work because, like you, Artie, most are veterans. You understand the definition of sacrifice.

This weekend, as you mentioned, is Memorial Day, a day we honor the memory of the heroes who have fallen in battle. And I want to thank you for recognizing that, Artie, and I want to thank your vast membership for recognizing that as well.

I'm also calling to thank you because for 17 years you've worked to see that our war veterans are remembered, returned home, and reunited with their families. I know that your work and your persistence and your diligence means a lot to relatives all over our country who wonder about their loved one—the fate of their loved one. In the Oval Office, I looked you in the eye as you told me about your relentless pursuit of finding out the plight of many of our POW/MIAs, and I appreciate so very much your concern, your care, and your persistence.

I also want to thank you and your organization, Artie, for honoring the men and women of our military who fight today in Afghanistan and in Iraq. You and I know—both know that they're carrying out this mission, a mission which will make America more secure and the world more free, with incredible courage and compassion and skill.

I am proud to be the Commander in Chief of these brave Americans. I will do—I will always honor their service. I will do everything in my power to ensure that they and their families receive the gratitude and respect of our great Nation.

It's a high honor, Artie, to serve as President of this great country. I work every day to be worthy of that honor. And I'm calling to tell you how much I appreciate the great faith you and your organization have placed in me by endorsing me for a second term.

Ride safe. May God bless you. May God bless your families, and may God continue to bless our great country. Thanks a lot.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. from the Residence at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Artie Muller, president, Mike Cobb, chairman of the board, Gary Sheffmeyer, vice president, and Preston B. "Jay" Fairlamb, second vice president, Rolling Thunder, Inc.

Remarks at a Memorial Day Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia

May 31, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thank you all. Welcome. Mr. Secretary, thank you for your great leadership as Secretary of Defense for our country. General Myers, members of the United States military, veterans, honored guests, and fellow Americans. This morning I had the honor of placing a wreath before the Tomb of the Unknowns. This custom is observed every Memorial Day on behalf of the American people as a mark of gratitude and respect.

And when this ceremony is concluded and all of us have gone on our way, the Honor Guard will keep watch over the Tomb. Every hour of every day, on the coldest nights, in the hardest rain, there is a sentinel of the 3d U.S. Infantry standing guard. The soldiers entrusted with that duty count it a privilege.